

Hope and Resilience in Times of Toxic Stress



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"Every now and then a man's mind is stretched by a new idea or sensation, and never shrinks back to its former dimensions."

-- Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*

Toxic Stress

- Individual level

- ❑ Death
- ❑ Cancer
- ❑ Divorce



- Larger scale (community, society)

- ❑ Food or housing insecurity
- ❑ Natural disaster
- ❑ Violence
- ❑ War
- ❑ Pandemic



Toxic stress occurs when...

We experience strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, family member substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or economic hardship—without adequate support.

Toxic stress can overwhelm us...

Toxic stress affects the whole person, family, community...

- Physically
- Emotionally
- Intellectually
- Spiritually



Resilience is...

- ...the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors.
- ...behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed.

Six Domains of Resilience



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<https://home.hellodriven.com/6-domains-of-resilience.html>

Resilience

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graph TD; A[Optimism  
focus on your  
strengths] --> B[Attitude to life  
focus on action  
'can do']; B --> C[Emotional Awareness  
key to good  
communication]; C --> D[Control ( of self)  
your response to  
circumstances/  
organisational ability]; D --> E[Social support  
network of  
friends or family]; E --> F[Sense of humour  
can laugh at lifes  
frustrations]; F --> G[Self-belief  
confident & have  
high self-esteem]; G --> H[Ability to  
problem solve  
Willing to  
adapt/be flexible]; H --> A;
```

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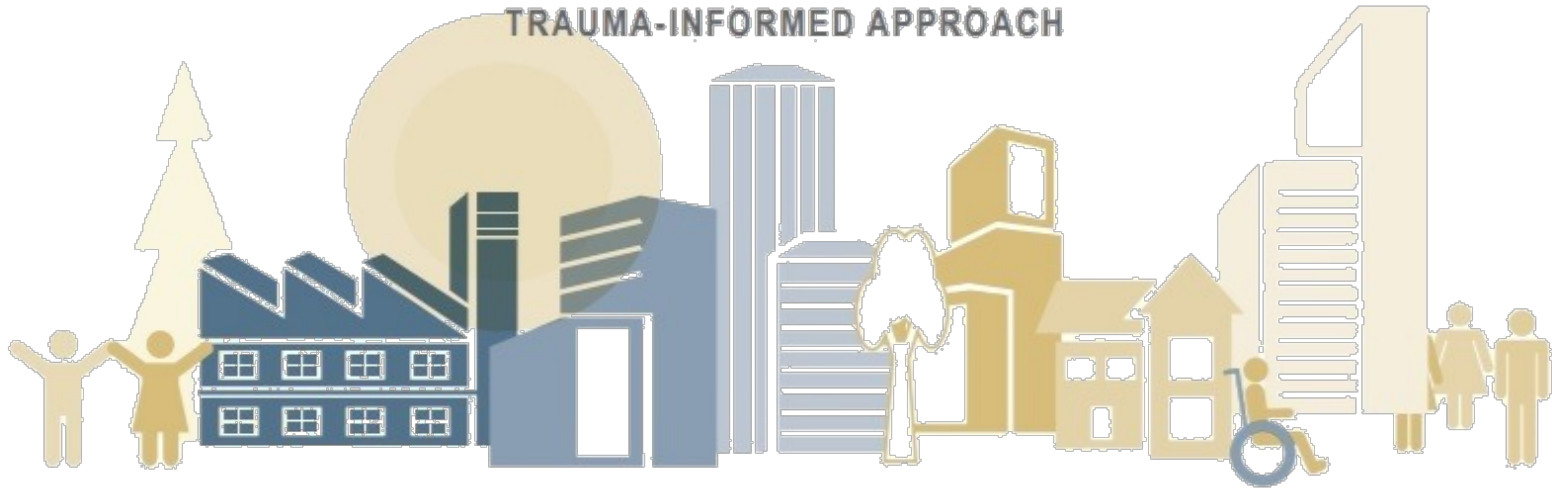
**Ability to
problem solve**
Willing to
adapt/be flexible

SAMHSA's 6 Guiding Principles

SAMHSA'S 6 PRINCIPLES

of a

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH



SAFETY

Prevents violence across the lifespan and creates safe physical environments.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Fosters positive relationships among residents, City Hall, police, schools and others.

EMPOWERMENT

Ensures opportunities for growth are available for all.

COLLABORATION

Promotes involvement of residents and partnership among agencies.

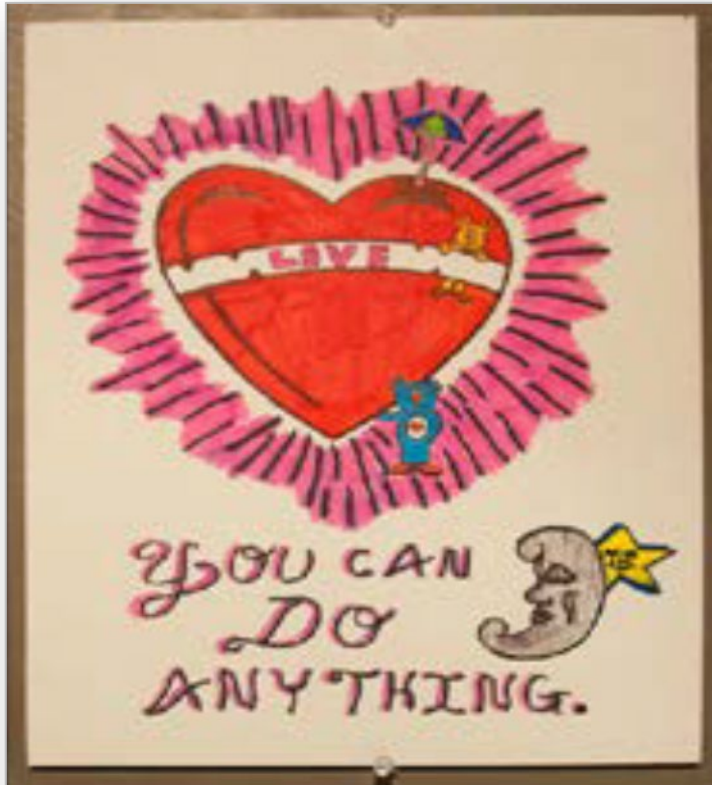
PEER SUPPORT

Engages residents to work together on issues of common concern.

HISTORY, GENDER, CULTURE

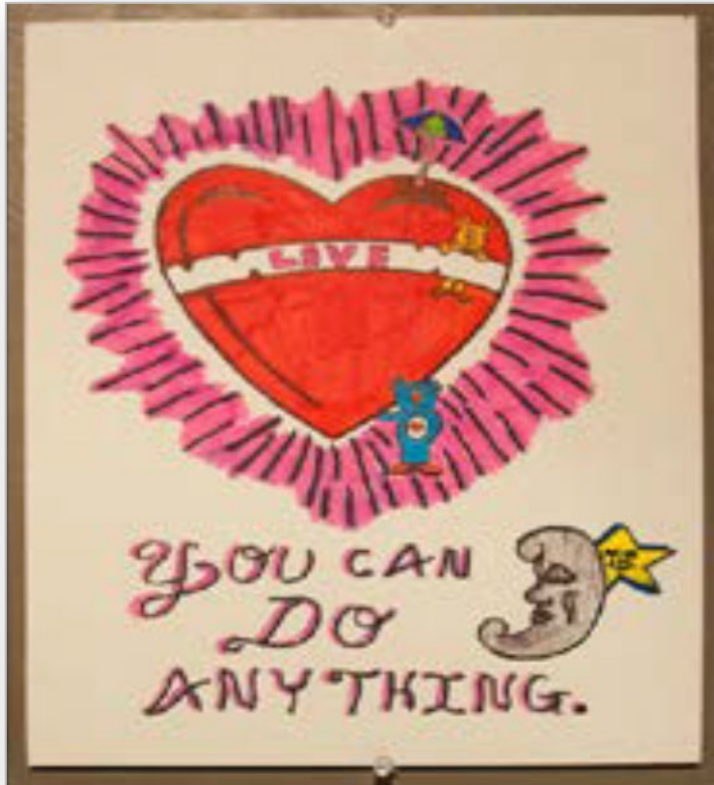
Values and supports history, culture and diversity.

Principle 1: Safety



Throughout the organization, staff and the people they serve, whether children or adults, feel physically and psychologically safe.

Principle 1: Safety



- Allow clients and employees to define safety (physical and psychological) and ensure it is a high priority of the organization.
- Create calm waiting areas and meeting/work spaces that are safe and welcoming.
- Respect privacy in all interactions.
- Provide conflict management training.
- Build supportive networks.

Principle 2: Trustworthiness and transparency



Organizational operations and decisions are conducted with transparency and the goal of building and maintaining trust among clients, family members and others involved with the organization.

Principle 2: Trustworthiness and transparency



- Ensure staff maintain healthy interpersonal boundaries with each other and with clients and can manage conflict appropriately.
- Keep consistent schedules and clear, consistent policies and procedures.
- Keep people fully informed of rules, procedures, activities, and schedules; be mindful that people who are frightened or overwhelmed may have difficulty processing information.
- Have task and role clarity.
- Set, communicate, and follow reasonable expectations for clients and employees.

Principle 3: Empowerment, Voice, Choice



Individuals' strengths and experiences are recognized and built upon; the experience of having a voice and choice is validated and new skills developed.

The organization fosters a belief in resilience.

Clients are supported in developing self-advocacy skill and self-empowerment.

Principle 3: Empowerment, Voice, Choice



- Provide training in self-advocacy skills and self-empowerment for employees and clients.
- Design programs, services and settings to allow client choice and control.
- Provide opportunities for feedback from clients and employees.
- Provide training in managing emotions and stress; educate and encourage self-care.
- Acknowledge employee and client strengths.

Principle 4: Collaboration & Mutuality



Partnering and leveling of power differences between staff and clients, and among organizational staff from direct care to administrators, demonstrates that healing happens in relationships, and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making.

Everyone has a role to play; one does not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic.

Principle 4: Collaboration & Mutuality



- Provide opportunities for relationship building among employees and between employees and clients.
- Create and celebrate networks of support.
- Value and celebrate all voices.
- Recognize the importance of all employees.
- Share power and decision-making whenever possible.

Principle 5: Peer Support

Peer support and mutual self-help are key vehicles for establishing safety and hope, building trust, enhancing collaboration, serving as models of recovery and healing, and maximizing a sense of empowerment.



Principle 5: Peer Support



- Create a sense of community and support for employees and clients.
- Recognize and reward team work.
- Encourage employees to support one another.
- Model this.
- Gently call out those who might need to practice self-care to address compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.

Principle 6: Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues



The organization actively moves past cultural stereotypes and biases, offers gender-responsive services, leverages the healing value of traditional cultural connections, and recognizes and addresses historical trauma.

Principle 6: Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues



- Approach each person/situation with interest and respect.
- Seek a deep understanding of the individuals and communities you work with. Use practices that embrace shared learning and uplift cultural wellness and wisdom.
- Encourage self-care, such as time off and wellness practices.

L. R. Madhujan, India, says...

“For people who feel safe at home, the isolation period is the best time to plan for the future. Try to be creative. We can survive all this. We have the strength. Soon, new mornings will come. The flowers will bloom and the streets will become active. The sun will shine more brightly. The aroma is fragrant.”

Stories of hope, resilience and inspiration during the coronavirus pandemic

<https://www.apa.org/international/global-insights/stories-pandemic#>



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Learn more ...

Wilmington University:



- [Center for Prevention Science](#)
- [Trauma Informed Approaches Undergraduate Certificate](#)
- [Graduate Certificate in Trauma and Resilience](#)

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